



Don't Give Up On Chronic Pain

Rainy weather has limited Henry Schumacher's ability to work on his car, a 1967 Mustang that he is restoring. Being limited by the weather is far preferable to being limited by pain, which characterized Mr. Schumacher's life from 1994 until last fall, when he finally found relief after undergoing a series of procedures at the Huntington Center for Pain Treatment.

Mr. Schumacher suffered a back injury in 1988 and his condition progressively worsened to the point where he was continually in pain. The pain started in his lower back and radiated down both legs and into his feet. By the time he was in his early forties, Mr. Schumacher had reached a point where he was unable to accomplish the tasks he had once taken for granted. He could no longer work around the house, restore his prized car or go fishing.

"I had gone to different surgeons and different pain clinics," Mr. Schumacher recalled. "Other doctors gave up on me. They didn't know what else they could do to help me."

With a series of cutting-edge treatments, **Nolan Tzou, MD**, Director of the Huntington Center for Pain Treatment, provided Mr. Schumacher with relief that he hadn't thought possible.

"The procedures changed my life," Mr. Schumacher exclaimed. "It was remarkable. I was able to do things I hadn't done in years."

Dr. Tzou recommended a facet joint injection, which involves a combination of cortisone and a long acting anesthetic directly into the lumbar facet joints, which are located in pairs on the back of the spine.

"Facet joint pain is an often undiagnosed pain syndrome. However, patients can get arthritis in this region just as in any joint in the body," Dr. Tzou explained. As the vertebrae lose height, there is additional pressure on the facet joints, which can cause an arthritic condition.

The next procedure Dr. Tzou recommended was a Rhizotomy, a specialized technique that uses electrical energy to burn the nerve that carries the pain signal throughout the body. To ensure that the correct nerve is targeted, Dr. Tzou uses a needle to stimulate the nerves and identify the source of the pain impulse. Then, using a special insulated needle with an active tip, the nerve is electrified. Although not permanent, pain relief can be long lasting.

"The nerve can grow back in eight months to a year," Dr. Tzou commented. Rhizotomy can be repeated if symptoms return.

Dr. Tzou noted that these procedures are not commonly performed in the community hospital setting, "I've been to so many doctors and had so many procedures, but nothing ever worked," Mr. Schumacher stated. "Nobody really put a lot of time into trying to find a resolution to my problem. Then I met Dr. Tzou, and he has kept at it, He's very dedicated."